

IDENTIFYING STAFF AND STAKEHOLDER
BRAND PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROBERT M. KERR
FOOD & AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS CENTER

By

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Abstract: The Robert M. Kerr Food & Agricultural Products Center (FAPC) on the Oklahoma State University campus works with Oklahoma food and agricultural entrepreneurial clients to create, promote, disseminate and further their brand and role in the marketplace. How can the FAPC assist clients with this process when the core essence of the FAPC brand is unidentified? The purpose of this research was to gather staff and stakeholder perceptions of the Robert M. Kerr Food & Agricultural Products Center brand. Objectives of this study included describing personal and professional characteristics (sex, age, ethnicity, education level, total income, food and/ or agriculture industry experience, business ownership, encounters and experience with the FAPC brand), and determine FAPC staff and stakeholder perceptions of the FAPC brand. Characteristics forms and focus group sessions were used to reach the objectives. The FAPC staff personal and professional characteristic results indicated the FAPC staff represented individuals of varying ethnicity, education, income, food and/ or agricultural experience levels, business ownership, as well as encounters and experience with the FAPC brand. Stakeholder personal and professional characteristic results identified the group as older business owners with more experience in the food and/ or agricultural industry. Yet, encounters and FAPC brand experience levels varied for the stakeholder audience. Recognition, one-stop-shop and limited resources were themes of the staff focus group session. Recognition, limited resources, uniqueness, university setting and supporting Oklahoma were themes of the stakeholder focus group session. In sum, personal and professional characteristics and brand perceptions, as well as points of discussion in data collection were mixed amongst FAPC staff and stakeholders. As this study represented two key FAPC audiences with greater awareness of the FAPC brand, recommendations for future research include brand perception gathering of individuals who represent other FAPC audiences such as clients, state organizations or individuals with less awareness and experience with the FAPC brand. The FAPC should also consider an annual brand report as a source of brand measurement to streamline and bridge the gap of FAPC brand perceptions.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

The Robert M. Kerr Food & Agricultural Products Center (FAPC) is located on the campus of Oklahoma State University (OSU) in Stillwater, Oklahoma (FAPC Annual Report, 2012). Since the Center was constructed in 1997, the 96,000 square-foot facility has offered services from agribusiness assistance to food microbiology and oil seed chemistry to value-added wood products employing research faculty, professional staff and technical staff (FAPC Annual Report, 2012). This state-of-the-art, stand-alone, value-added center is home to research and services in the discipline areas of agribusiness economics, analytical chemistry, business planning and marketing, cereal chemistry, communications, food engineering, food chemistry, horticultural processing, meat science, microbiology, oil/oilseed chemistry, pilot plant, product development, quality control and assurance, and value-added wood products (FAPC Annual Report, 2011).

The FAPC mission, defined by Oklahoma legislature, is “to discover, develop, and deliver technical and business information that will stimulate and support the growth of value-added food and agricultural products and processing in Oklahoma” (Gross,

2006, p. 1). According to the FAPC 10-Year Economic Impact Report (2007),

The FAPC has facilitated the changing food industry and assisted in the development of value-added enterprises by offering a combination of in-house technical and laboratory services for entrepreneurs and existing businesses, on-site technical assistance for larger existing food processors, and various business and marketing assistance programs and workshops (p. 4).

Annually, the FAPC contributes more than \$200 million dollars to the Oklahoma economy (FAPC Annual Report, 2010). In 2011 alone, FAPC provided training and education to more than 1,100 industry clients and contributed to more than 200 client projects (FAPC Annual Report, 2011).

As the FAPC celebrated its 15-year anniversary, questions regarding the FAPC identity and brand surfaced. With the FAPC being located on the OSU campus, the purpose, disciplines and services offered are typically unknown to students, outside FAPC staff and faculty, and visitors to the university, or often miscommunicated to those who have experienced the FAPC brand (J. R. Escoubas, personal communication, 2011). According to Gross (2006), “Not many people know it [FAPC] exists or know the services it [FAPC] provides” (p. 2).

The FAPC staffs a communication manager and part-time graduate assistant to develop, expose, and promote the FAPC brand. In this effort, the FAPC communication team manages the FAPC website, develops and disseminates press releases and feature articles, publishes a bi-annual magazine, and maintains FAPC social network communication channels while offering internal services to faculty and staff of promoting workshops, producing creative public relations items, and photographing events (J. R.

Escoubas, personal communication, 2011). According to FAPC Director, J. Roy Escoubas, “The communications team covers all activities and projects of the FAPC, not only to promote the activities and projects, but also to increase the awareness of the function and purpose of the FAPC” (Gross, 2006, p. 1).

The FAPC business planning and marketing team of four individuals also work to brand the Center through their interaction with clients and during representations of the FAPC at tradeshow, Oklahoma business visits and other outings (J. R. Escoubas, personal communication, 2011). Although, the FAPC business planning and marketing, and communications teams communicate and brand the Center, the core essence of the FAPC brand is unknown (J. R. Escoubas, personal communication, 2011).

Brand research shows that themes and attributes associated with a given brand are ever changing and the core essence of a brand is more than a look, logo, color or identity (Maguire, Barnard, Butler, & Golding, 2008). A brand is defined as the consumer’s perception and emotional tie, or gut feeling to or about a product, service or organization (Maguire et al., 2008). Because people are emotional and intuitive beings, a brand develops personality traits humanizing the brand (Maguire et al., 2008). Furthermore, individuals, not companies, markets, or publics define brands. From origination, exposure, interaction and engagement impact the consumer experience impacting brand usage and buying decisions (Maguire et al., 2008).

Since inception, the FAPC has not conducted any form of brand measurement (M. Gross, personal communication, 2011). This study is an opportunity for the FAPC to understand and work toward an intended brand through capturing perceptions of two key audiences: staff and stakeholders (M. Gross, personal communication, 2011). Through

identifying FAPC brand perceptions of these two key audiences, members of the FAPC business and marketing, and communication services group can use the research findings to propose opportunities for potential rebranding, and brand emphasis, positioning, messaging (M. Gross, personal communication, 2011).

Statement of Problem

The FAPC works with Oklahoma food and agricultural entrepreneurial clients to create, promote, disseminate and further their brand and role in the marketplace. How can the FAPC assist clients with this process when the core essence of the FAPC brand is unidentified? With a marketplace cluttered with brand names and channels of consumer awareness opening, the need for an effectively communicated brand message is needed to differentiate products, services and organizations from the competition.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research was to gather staff and stakeholder perceptions of the Robert M. Kerr Food & Agricultural Products Center brand.

Objectives

The following objectives were formulated to accomplish the purpose of this study:

1. Describe selected characteristics (sex, age, ethnicity, education level, total income, food and/ or agriculture industry experience, business ownership, encounters and experience with the FAPC brand) of FAPC staff.
2. Describe selected characteristics (sex, age, ethnicity, education level, total income, food and/ or agriculture industry experience, business ownership, encounters and experience with the FAPC brand) of FAPC stakeholders.

3. Determine perceptions of FAPC staff regarding the FAPC brand.
4. Determine perceptions of FAPC stakeholders regarding the FAPC brand.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were accepted for this study:

1. Respondents reported accurate personal and professional characteristics (sex, age, ethnicity, education level, total income, food and/ or agriculture industry experience, business ownership, encounters and experience with the FAPC brand).
2. Responses given during focus groups sessions by FAPC staff and stakeholders were true and honest opinions.

Limitations of the Study

Data for this study were collected at FAPC events on November 10, 2011, and December 16, 2011. Participation was voluntary, so results of this research should not be generalized beyond those who chose to participate in the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of literature relevant to this research. A summary of literature related to branding and centers focusing on adding value to agricultural products is provided. Topics of this review include: What is a Brand, Successful Branding, Corporate vs. Non-profit Branding, Branding Agriculture, Value-Added Agriculture Centers, and the FAPC Background. Finally, the theoretical framework of brand personality for this study is provided.

Branding

What is a Brand?

A brand has specific characteristics that differentiate one product from another in a competitive marketplace (Park, Jaworski, & MacInnis, 1986).

The primary function of brands is to reduce our anxiety in making choices. The very fact we are anxious indicates that we have freedom to choose. The more we sense we know about a product, the less anxious we feel. When we know less about a product, then our uncertainty arises. (Ind, 2004, p. 17)

“A product can be copied by a competitor; a brand is unique. A product can be quickly outdated; a successful brand is timeless” (Aaker, 1991, p. 1). At the time of

purchase, individuals will typically buy a familiar brand because the familiar brand is deemed reliable and of high quality with likelihood to maintain a presence in the marketplace (Aaker, 1991). “A brand can be defined as an asset that does not have a physical existence and the value of which cannot be determined exactly unless it becomes the subject of a specific business transaction of sale or acquisition” (Seetharaman, Nadzir, Gunalan, 2001, p. 243). A brand can provide many services or act on different levels of function for a business or organization (Reynolds, 2007). “In effect, a brand is the sum of the customer’s experiences with the relevant product or company. It is transmitted in every interaction with the customer over the lifetime of the relationship” (Lenderman, 2006, p. 303).

Successful Branding

Branding is important in the ever-increasing consumer marketplace (Seetharaman et al., 2001, p. 244). Njite (2005) said “Brands create a strategic position and specific associations in the mind of the consumer” (p. 3). Njite (2005) further concluded:

Branding occurs when the enterprise creates added value in the mind of the consumers. The result of the branding process is a perceived value beyond the observable physical value of the product. It is this perceived value that differentiates the product from those that are created to satisfy the same consumer need. (p. 19)

According to Rajagopal (2010), “Consumers recognize brands by building favorable attitude towards them and through the purchase decision process” (p. 186). According to Seetharaman et al. (2001),

Awareness, loyalty and quality perceptions are the three main components of a successful brand. Investing in branding activities creates brand equity. Equity exists when the customers are aware of the brand, loyal to the brand and perceives the brand as having quality. (p. 244)

How consumers evaluate a brand is a result of the brand associations developed through their interactions with the brand leading to brand preference and equity of the brand (Njite, 2005). Louis and Lombart (2010) said “The concept of brand equity is the added value that a brand brings to a product. It is the additional effect in a consumer’s response to a brand that stretches beyond the product itself and its attributes” (p. 115). The perceived brand quality, attitude of the brand, intentions of future behavior, trust in the brand, attachment to the brand, and commitment to the brand reflects the brand personality, and ultimately defines the brand equity (Louis & Lombart, 2010).

The organization’s brand and brand image can be the most critical marketing effort (Park et al., 1986). Brands with higher self-worth are less likely to rely on brand names to enhance their appeal and image, while brands with self-worth concerns are more likely to rely on a brand name to enhance their appeal and image (Swaaminathan, Stilley, and Ahluwalia, 2009). According to Rajagopal (2010), “Consumers have only one image of a brand, created by deployment of the brand assets at their disposal: name, tradition, packaging, advertising, promotion posture, pricing, trade acceptance, sales force discipline, consumer satisfaction, and repurchases patterns” (p. 190).

Njite (2005) stated:

As branding continues to gain significance in the marketing of products, marketers have spent millions of dollars to create and support brand images. Such

efforts definitely pay, as evidenced by the well-defined and strong images of brands such as Coca-Cola, Infiniti, Hilton Hotels, Marlboro and Pepsi. (p. 5)

Brand identity is a result of the consumer's interpretation of the brand name, image, symbols, and communications (Louis & Lombart, 2010). For example, marketing representatives of the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens reviewed concepts of brand awareness. Individuals on the Olympic Games marketing committee explored ways sports or athletic enthusiasts view the brands represented during this particular event (Maguire, et al., 2008). This committee's research identified a connection between the various sponsors advertising options. Sponsors of the games focused their attention on humanity and directed their branded advertising with this in mind (Maguire et al., 2008). As a whole, this study proposed more efficient advertising to capitalize on brand awareness at the next Olympic Games (Maguire et al., 2008).

Brand research has made a progression in the study of the relationship between consumers and organizations with research in brand loyalty (Heere, 2010). According to Reynolds (2007), "Branding is a way for businesses to differentiate their products and services and establish a reputation that will build customer loyalty" (p. 12). A consumer preference of an individual brand reflects a measurement of loyalty to the product or service in a competition-like setting (Rajagopal, 2010). According to Rajagopal (2010),

Consumers recognize brands by building favorable attitudes toward them and through the purchase decision process. Brand preference is understood as a measure of brand loyalty in which a consumer exercises his decisions to choose a particular brand in presence of competing brands. (p. 186)

Through customer brand loyalty, purchasing decisions, and the product lifecycle and market shares are likely extended and increased (Reynolds, 2007). To build and retain customer loyalty, companies define and communicate distinctiveness in brand performance then emotionally connection with customers to internalize the brand (Njite, 2005). AMS Certifications, trademarks, service marks and certification marks assist with distinguishing a brand (Reynolds, 2007). Products with a certification or mark can take advantage of identifying their products with a brand (Reynolds, 2007). Additionally, these processes eliminate products with less brand recognition (Reynolds, 2007).

The long-term success of a brand depends on the brand meaning prior to market commerce, the meaning behind the face or image, and the ability to maintain as time passes (Park et al., 1986). “In a environment where different brands compete for the same share of the market, it’s important that companies understand how well their brand is doing” (Adams & Brace, 2006, p. 5). For a brand to remain powerful and consistent in the marketplace, the brand must be managed (Park et al., 1986). Brand management includes the three steps of introduction, elaboration, and reinforcement (Park et al., 1986). A strategic plan helps to create a consistent message and enhance the duration of a brand’s life cycle (Park et al., 1986).

Corporate vs. Non-Profit Branding

Brand and the idea of branding has recently escalated to a hot topic in the corporate business realm and other arenas of commerce (Rindell & Strandvik, 2010). Ind (2004) stated “Branding is more complex at the corporate level. The organization not only has to manage its relationship with consumers – it has to take into account all the

other stakeholders such as investors, media, government, suppliers, buyers and employees” (p. 23).

Many company executives are investigating the question of corporate brand image (Rindell & Standvik, 2010). In a corporate business environment, Rindell and Standvik (2010) refer to corporate brand as “brand controlled by the company “ and “brand controlled by consumers and stakeholders” (p. 8). Furthermore, a corporate brand is internalized or company controlled and the external approach of consumer or experience controlled (Rindell & Strandvik, 2010).

Corporate brands establish their brand through associations in the mind of the consumer to differentiate the brand through product attributes, attitude, relationships, values, and corporate credibility (Keller & Richey, 2006). Keller and Richey (2006) identify passionate and compassionate; creative and disciplines; and agile and collaborative as dimensions of a corporate brand reflecting the heart, mind, and body. They further concluded:

Employees who live the brand and are close to customers are more likely to energetically pursue new solutions. The corporate personality starts with the company’s employees, who bring this personality to life and actually determine who a company is. A company can instill the right values and personality attributes in its people by establishing corporate-wide values for everyone to live by, investing in recruiting and training, communicating the objective openly and listening to its employees. (Keller & Richey, 2006, p. 81)

As time passes, the original intent of a corporate brand evolves (Keller & Richey, 2006). This form of brand evolution causes a loss of initial meaning creating a need or

desire for brand management (Rindell & Strandvik, 2010). Corporate brand management requires attention, but can be used to create new opportunity for business ventures or marketing efforts within a given firm (Rindell & Strandvik, 2010).

Non-profit organizations face similar brand marketing opportunities and failures as a corporate or small business organization. According to Voeth and Herbst (2008), “A brand is thereby defined as an associated perception, which is rooted in the psyche of the target group and retrieved through the display of symbols that represent the organization” (p. 73). The brand of a non-profit organization typically develops over a long period of time. Non-profit brand are often characterized with trustworthiness, social competence, humanity, idealism, and solidarity (Voeth & Herbst, 2008). In an ideal situation, the mission statement of a non-profit brand should be a direct reflection of the brand (Voeth & Herbst, 2008). Results claim that non-profit organizations should define themselves through a mission statement (Voeth & Herbst, 2008).

Branding Agriculture

Over the course of time, technological advancements have led a progression in the agricultural society (Kinnucan & Myrland, 2008). The agriculture and food industry has become highly modernized from in the field inception to the finished, branded marketed product (Verbeke, 2005). Agricultural producers can be acknowledged for creating a brand through his day-to-day procedures (Hayes, Lence, & Stoppa, 2004). No different than the department of marketing for a large equipment manufacturer, a farmer brands his product (Hayes et al., 2004). A consistent size, shape, form or even flavor unique to an individual or farming operation results in a branded product (Hayes et al., 2004).

In three case studies of Parma Ham, Brunello di Montalcino wine, and Vidalia onions, a brand was established through consumer perceptions of product consistency (Hayes et al., 2004). Brand logos for food items can strengthen interpretation of a food product (Lane, Dickinson, & Aru, 2010). Strong relationships of agriculture brand logos and brand names result in a high consumer preference (Lane et al., 2010). According to Lane et al (2010), “Consumption may be enhanced for foods that are associated with liked brands, but brands that actually cause positive effect, which nevertheless are liked as if they were the causes of liking” (p.106). Furthermore, maintaining agriculture brand equity involves best practices of procedure and production implementation (Hayes et al., 2004).

Centers for Value-Added Agriculture

General History

According to Ulmer, Holcomb, Woods, Willoughby, and Tilley (2005), “The evolution of value-added centers at land-grant universities, along with the recent development of numerous Ag Innovation Centers, has been viewed as a sign of a shifting emphasis to value-added agriculture research and technical assistance efforts” (p. 1).

“Value-added centers have cropped up across the United States in the past two decades with increased frequency and attention in the last 10 years” (Holcomb & Johnson, 2007, p. 401). Examples of value-added agricultural centers include Oregon State University’s Food Innovation Center, Ohio State University’s Heartland Agdeavor Association and Oklahoma State University’s Robert M. Kerr Food & Agricultural Product Center (Holcomb & Johnson, 2007).

According to McConaghy (2007), “Most value-added centers have similarities

such as cooperation between public and private entities and a connection with a land-grant university (p. 2). Funding from these value-added agricultural centers comes from state or federal governments (McConaghy, 2007).

Background of the FAPC at OSU

As the result of a feasibility study and bill to initiate construction by the late Senator Kerr, building of the Oklahoma Food and Agricultural Products Research and Technology Center began in 1996, and was open for business in 1997 (FAPC 10-Year Economic Impact, 2007). More than \$18 million in state funds were used to build the facility (FAPC 10-Year Economic Impact, 2007). Later in 2007, with approval from the Oklahoma A&M Colleges Board of Regents, the Center experienced a name change from Oklahoma Food and Agricultural Products Research and Technology Center to the Robert M. Kerr Food & Agricultural Products (McConaghy, 2007). In light of the 10-year anniversary, the Center “celebrated its renaming to honor the late Senator Robert M. Kerr. Senator Kerr was the legislative and agricultural leader who championed the establishment of the FAPC” (FAPC 10-Year Economic Impact, 2007, p. 3).

The FAPC’s goal is “to keep the products, jobs and dollars in Oklahoma” (FAPC Brochure, 2011). According to the FAPC’s website, the Center’s mission is to “Discover, develop, and deliver technical and business information that will stimulate and support the growth of value-added food and agricultural products and processing in Oklahoma.” Furthermore, the 2012 FAPC Annual Report stated:

The FAPC strives to serve the Oklahoma food and agribusiness industries with the best science, technology, and business practices to compete in a global market. Leading work areas and trends include food safety, food traceability, food

quality, locally grown, sustainability, convenience, and costs. These work areas and trends are expected to drive the food industry and will continue to be manifested by retail and food service consumer demands. (p. 5)

According to a FAPC brochure (2011), “The FAPC also helps to bridge the gap that sometimes exists between academia and the private sector by offering large and small businesses, producers and entrepreneurs access to faculty and staff with expertise in business and technical disciplines” (p. 1). The FAPC pilot processing facilities, research laboratories, educational programs and seminars assist in keeping value-added processing and technology current in Oklahoma (FAPC Brochure, 2011).

In 2011, the Center employed 8 faculty members working in oilseed chemistry, cereal chemistry, horticultural products and processing, food industry economics, food microbiology, and value-added wood products (FAPC Annual Report, 2011).

Additionally, the 2011 employee roster included 11 professional and 6 technical staff members working in food process engineering, food microbiology, food sensory analysis, food harvest and processing technology, total quality management, communications and media support, and marketing and business management (FAPC Annual Report, 2011).

In the most recent reporting year, the FAPC Annual (2012) stated:

FAPC has completed its 15-year anniversary and had continued to contribute significantly to the Oklahoma economy. FAPC had a \$200 million-plus impact on the Oklahoma economy each year, according to data. Additionally, FAPC plays a major role in the launch of about 60 entrepreneurial businesses that have added about 330 jobs in 35 Oklahoma communities, primarily rural, and more than \$6 million in annual sales revenue to the state. (p. 5)

Industry insight and high-level leadership for the Center is the responsibility of the FAPC Industry Advisory Committee appointed by the Oklahoma Governor, Senate President Pro Tempore, and Speaker of the House of Representatives (FAPC 10-Year Economic Impact, 2007).

In 1996, the Oklahoma Legislature and the Governor mandated a food and agriculture industry-appointed advisory committee to oversee and advise the Center Director in the work of the Center (FAPC 10-Year Economic Impact, 2007). Their direct mandate was to “assist and advise the Oklahoma Food and Agricultural Products Research and Technology Center in prioritizing projects, setting fees, creating and designing joint ventures for the development and advancement of the production, processing, handling and marketing of agricultural commodities, so that the Center may meet the needs of the State’s value-added processing entities” (FAPC Annual Report, 2003, p. 4).

This advisory committee gathers bi-annually with the FAPC. According to the Director’s Comments in the 2010 FAPC Annual Report, “This committee gives the FAPC a strong industry linkage to ensure programs and services are useful, effective, and the FAPC is accountable for its resources” (p. 3). Additionally, the 2003 FAPC Annual reports stated:

The appointees represent Oklahoma agricultural food and fiber producers, Oklahoma food processors, national food processors, economic development representatives, food and agriculture commodity distribution representatives, food and agriculture commodity transportation representatives, the textile industry in Oklahoma, and the food marketing sector in Oklahoma. (p. 4)

Theoretical Framework

Brand Personality

The idea of brand personality dates to Martineau in 1958 when he made a connection to clothing characteristics to brand personality dimensions in a retail store setting (Voeth & Herbst, 2008). In the 1970's, researchers attempted to describe brand personality by identifying human characteristics (Voeth & Herbst, 2008). It wasn't until 1997 that Jennifer L. Aaker developed the Brand Personality Scale as a form of personality trait measurement (Voeth & Herbst, 2008). Aaker's scale was deemed a reliable and valid construct, and has since been replicated by many researchers (Voeth & Herbst, 2008). Of Aaker's (1997) 60 brand attributes, product brand attributes cluster into sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness (Keller & Richey, 2006).

Marketers have attached personalities to brands as a key to marketing success (Wilson, Callaghan & Stainforth, 2007, p. 460). David Ogilvy said consumers do not buy products, rather they buy products with a personality" (Wilson et al., 2007, p. 460). "Thus brand personality is the concept of relationship marketing that refers to all personality traits associated with a brand" (Dolatabadi, Kazemi, & Rad, 2012, p. 297) Furthermore, consumers correlate brand personality dimensions with the brand's added value (Valette-Florence, Guizani, & Merunka, 2009).

Besides being able to differentiate brands, the personality factor might also reflect emotions or feelings of the brand, encouraging the target group to perceive the brand as an active, contributing friend and to enter into a long-term relationship with the brand. (Voeth & Herbst, 2008, p. 77)

A brand can be attributed to personality traits similar to those of a human (Aaker & Fournier, 1995). According to Aaker (1997), “Brand personality is referred to as the set of human characteristics associated with a brand” (p. 17). According to Swaaminathan, Stilley, and Ahluwalia (2009), “Humanizing a brand empowers it to play a more central role in the consumer’s life, potentially enabling the consumer to project an aspect of his or her self that might be desirable for relationships he or she seeks” (p. 985). A humanized brand develops a brand personality with social attributes, which allow consumers to create a personal connection and partake in facilitation of social interactions (Swaaminathan et al., 2009). These researchers go on to further describe brand personality as a “vehicle of consumer self-expression and can be instrumental in helping consumers express their actual self, ideal self or specific aspects of the self” (Swaaminathan et al., 2009, p. 986).

Brand researchers have suggested that brand personality is a result of individuals associated with the brand (Chan-Olmsted & Cha, 2007). “Personality traits come to be associated with a brand in a direct way by the people associated with the brand” (Aaker, 1997, p. 348). Huang, Mitchell, Rosenaum-Elliott (2012) stated, “Brand personality is a popular metaphor in marketing to investigate consumers’ brand perceptions and describe brands as if they were human beings” (p. 334). Personality traits associated with a brand, like personality traits associated with an individual/human, are “enduring” and “distinct” (Aaker, 1997, p. 348).

By attaching personality to a brand, a better understanding of the brand regarding views of self and views of others is established (Swaaminathan et al., 2009). “By asking individuals to describe a brand as if it had come to life as a person, the meaning

associated with a brand (as determined by factors such as brand attributes, benefits, prices and product category) can be identified” (Aaker & Fournier, 1995). Keller and Richey (2006) offered brand personality questions of: “If the brand were to come alive as a person, what would it be like? What would it do? Where would it live? What would it wear? Who would it talk to if it went to a party and what would it talk about?” (p. 74).

“Brand personality can influence consumer preferences and choices in various ways. By humanizing the brand, brand personality provides opportunities for building strong consumer brand relationships” (Swaaminathan et al., 2009, p. 996). The role of brand personality can “range from a match with the consumer’s actual self-concept, to signaling a desirable image via brand personality as means of developing positive interpersonal relationships, to possibly even the use of a brands relationship partners” (Swaaminathan et al., 2009). For example, the brand personality of Levi’s 501 jeans is “American, western, ordinary, common, blue collar, hard working and traditional” (Aaker & Fournier, 1995, p. 394). Furthermore, in a comparison of vodka, Absolut Vodka personality traits reflect “cool, hip, contemporary 25-year old” and Stolli’s personality traits reflect “intellectual, conservative, older man” (Aaker, 1997, p. 347).

According to Ind (2004), “There is a need to sustain the brand over time. This requires something that personalizes the idea of the brand so that it attains a vitality that motivates employees and builds identification with the organizations cause” (p. 161).

Unlike a product, brand personality that typically relates to consumers and user imagery for a specific product brand, a corporate brand personality can be defined in terms of the human characteristics or traits of the employees of the corporation

as a whole. A corporate brand personality will reflect the values, words, and actions of all employees of the corporation. (Keller & Richey, 2006, p. 74)

Swaaminathan et al. (2009) stated:

Attachment to a given brand extends the attachment perspective by demonstrating that the use of certain brand personalities can enhance the brand attachment level and brand preferences of even those individuals whose attachment styles are known to handicap them with the lowest potential for attachment in the interpersonal relationship context. (p. 286)

As the voice of an organization, the future of a given brand lies in the hands of an organization's communication or brand manager (Lenderman, 2006). Lenderman (2006) stated:

Consumers are more skeptical than ever about marketing and advertising, and often tune out marketing messages completely. This only serves to magnify the imperative for brand managers to find out and appreciate how their brand is understood by the empowered consumer, and how consumers are interacting with them differently than before. (p. 303)

Brand managers create the personality of a brand by evaluating associations among brand consumers (Heere, 2010). According to Heere (2010), "Managers anticipate on this notion by providing these human characteristics to their product and their marketing strategies" (p. 20). Recent brand personality findings help brand managers to create or further define their organizations brand personality (Heere, 2010).

J. Aaker's Take on Branding

Theories focusing on brand personality stem from research originally conducted

by Stanford University's Jennifer L. Aaker (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003). Azoulay & Kapferer (2003) stated:

This renewed interest is a rather old concept (brand personality) signals that the metaphor of brands as people is held as increasingly more pertinent at a time when marketing stresses so much the importance of creating relationships with brands. Most of the research papers on brand personality are now based on Aaker's scale. (p. 143-144)

Aaker (1997) defined personality as characteristics verse a slate of traits. "Aaker (1995) and Fournier (1994) have argued that brand personality is an important topic of study and these researchers have used a range of tools to identify and measure brand images and brand personalities" (Wilson, Callaghan, & Stainforth, 2007, p. 460).

According to Aaker and Fournier (1995), "Creating a brand personality literally involves personifications of a brand. To do so, the brand must be 'alive' – the brand must be an action figure that intentionally does things" (p. 392). Aaker and Fournier (1995) described brand personality as:

Brand personality is conceptualized based on the way that observers attribute personality characteristics to the people during everyday interaction. Based on this conceptualization, the possibilities for using narrative theory as a profitable framework for understanding the processes by which consumers look for personality impressions (via brand characteristics and behaviors) are discussed. Viewing brand personality with the narrative perspective has direct implications for (a) the mode of thought used by consumers to derive personality meaning for brands, (b) the technique used by advertisers to create brand personality and (c)

how to measure consumer perceptions of brand personality. (p. 391-392)

With brand personality as the vehicle to identify brand perceptions, narrative perspective provides direction for measuring a brand (Aaker & Fournier, 1995). Aaker & Fournier (1995) found:

A narrative perspective provides direction for measuring brand personality. For instance, by using an approach based on narrative theory (e.g. Tell me a story about brand X.; What would brand X do in this circumstance?; If brand X were a person, how would it respond?) researchers may be able to identify which pattern of actions for a brand are most salient and meaningful. (p. 392)

Summary

The review of literature provides support for the need to identify FAPC brand perceptions of two key audience, FAPC staff and stakeholder. For the FAPC to assist its clients with developing and marketing their brand in a consumer marketplace cluttered with brand names, the Center must understand perceptions of its own brand.

The idea of branding works as a vehicle for businesses to differentiate products and services while establishing a reputation that will build consumer loyalty (Reynolds, 2007). Aaker (1991) said “It can be much harder to compete against a general feeling of liking rather than a specific feature” (p. 45). Consumers build favor and establish brand loyalty toward a brand, which impacts consumers purchasing decisions (Rajagopal, 2010).

Marketers attach personalities to brands as a key to marketing success (Wilson et al, 2007). According to Chan-Olmsted and Cha (2007), “An established brand personality may result in consumers having stronger emotional connections to the brand

and greater trust and loyalty” (p. 136). The personality factor of branding encourages consumers to enter into a relationship with the brand (Aaker & Fournier, 1995). Furthermore, a brand must be managed to remain powerful and consistent in the marketplace (Park et al., 1986).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methods and procedures used to conduct this research. Compliance with the university Institutional Review Board (IRB) is described. Also included is a description of the research design and the subjects of this study, as well as methods used to collect data, including instrument development. The chapter concludes with data analysis procedures, as well as a description of trustworthiness, creditability, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Institutional Review Board

Oklahoma State University requires all studies with human subjects be reviewed and approved before conducting research by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The application provided the method of data collection, personal and professional characteristics form, participant consent form and the focus group moderator guide used during the identified sessions. This study AG-11-44 was approved by IRB on November 7, 2011 after revisions were made. Prior to participation in the focus group session, subjects reviewed and signed a consent form. The research also followed the IRB approved moderator guide throughout the sessions.

Possible incidence of noncompliance IRB protocol AG-11-44 was reported

following the FAPC staff perception research collection by a participant. The concern of the participant included the way in which staff were recruited to the session. The participant felt rather than being voluntarily, staff were recruited to participate in the session and strongly encouraged by the FAPC Director. The IRB Chair reviewed staff perception data collection and IRB Manager deemed in agreement with IRB procedure RR408. Due to the minimal risk nature of the research and the exempt status of the protocol, the incidence of noncompliance was determined to be an unintentional mistake that was an isolated incident and was not serious and continuing in nature.

Research Design

This study included a personal and professional characteristics form and qualitative focus group data collection processes. “Qualitative research aims to uncover information about the way people think and behave, and to identify patterns in those thoughts and patterns” (Adams & Brace, 2006, p. 21). “One of the chief advantages of qualitative research for marketing contexts is that it permits research to evolve, develop and build upon earlier understanding” (Carson, Gilmore, Perry, & Gronhaug, 2001, p. 206). “By talking in depth with people, researchers can find out about their deeply held beliefs, and identify how new opinions might be taking shape” (Adams & Brace, 2006, p. 75). “In exploring the respondents’ views in depth, the researcher can uncover highly valid information about some of the views held within the population of interest” (Adams & Brace, 2006, p. 76).

Focus group research is a means of collecting qualitative data (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). Focus group research has experienced growth because of insight gained in “the dynamic relationship of attitudes, opinions, motivations, concerns, and

problems related to current and projected human activity” (Folch-Lyon & Trost, 1981, p. 443). Insights into regular or problematic experiences and the meaning attached to these experiences of selected individuals and groups to achieve an understanding through qualitative research (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

Dynamics of Focus Group Research

Focus group research involves “engaging a small number of people in an informal group discussion around a particular topic or set of issues” (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2009, p. 2). According to Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009), “group dynamics play in determining group outcomes” (p. 10). Focus group participants are chosen from specific target audiences (Folch-Lyon & Trost, 1981). Researchers can expect the make-up of the focus group “to influence the quality of responses given by one or more of the participants” (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009, p. 10). Adams and Brace (2006) identified a sample as “a selection of people who can be seen as representative of all the different groups of people who might be affected by, or have an interest in, the subject being researched” (p. 47). Formation of focus groups can be preexisting groups such as work colleagues, groups that meet regularly or newly formed groups selected by the researcher (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009, p. 4).

Respondents should be assured that their identity is protected and views remain confidential (Adams & Brace, 2006). “Effective research depends on the respondent feeling comfortable enough to share information” (Adams & Brace, 2006, p. 9).

Group session research has been used successfully in preliminary and on-going activities of commercial programs, especially activities related to the communication value of such diverse matters as corporate image, product image,

brand image, product concept, product design, packaging design (graphic, structural, chromatic, semantic, etc.), advertising campaigns, promotions, and so on. (Folch-Lyon & Trost, 1981, p. 444)

Facilitating Focus Group Research

According to Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009), “The research question and research design ultimately guide how the focus group is constructed” (p. 3). “The group discussion is conducted by the moderator, whose role is to ensure that everyone contributes and the discussion is kept on track” (Adams & Brace, 2006, p. 40). In the focus group setting, the moderator presents a series of prepared questions to participants (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2009, p. 4). According to Folch-Lyin and Trost (1981), “It is essential that the moderator introduce topics and guide the discussion in an unbiased manner” (p. 444). “The moderator is responsible for facilitating the discussion, prompting members to speak, requesting overly talkative members to let others talk, and encouraging all the members to participate” (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2009, p. 4). “The people being interviewed express their thoughts in the way they wish, and the researcher’s role is to evaluate the importance and relevance of what is said and done” (Adams & Brace, 2006, p. 21). According to Adams and Brace (2006), “Well-run discussion groups can generate a lot of information in a very short time” (p. 40).

Analyzing Focus Group Research

Qualitative data consists of detailed descriptions of events, situations and interactions between people and things, providing depth and detail (Carson, Gilmore, Perry, & Gronhaug, 2001). Data analysis is a systematic search for meaning (Hatch, 2002). According to Hatch (2002),

It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others. Analysis means organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories. (p. 148)

Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009) discussed the analysis of focus group research:

Focus group theorists disagree as to the most appropriate unit of analysis for focus group data to analyze (i.e., individual, group, or interaction). Some theorists believe that the individual or the group should be the focus of the analysis instead of the unit of analysis (as cited in Kidd & Marshall, 2000). However, most focus group researchers use the group as the unit of analysis (Morgan, 1997). By doing so, the researchers code the data and present emergent themes, unfortunately, typically not delineating the type of qualitative analysis used. (Wilkinson, 2004)

Glaser and Strauss (1967) developed constant comparison analysis or the method of analyzing qualitative research. Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) surveyed qualitative researcher and found that more than 80% responded with constant comparison analysis as their method of data analysis, which consists of three stages of characterization.

To perform a constant comparison analysis, the researcher first reads through the entire set of data (this also could be a subset of the data). After doing so, the researcher chunks the data into smaller meaningful parts. Then, the researcher labels each chunk with a descriptive title or a “code.” The researcher takes pains to compare each new chunk of data with previous codes, so similar chunks will be labeled with the same code. After all the data have been coded, the codes are

grouped by similarity, and a theme is identified and documented based on each grouping. (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007, p 565)

“Focus group data can be analyzed via constant comparison analysis, especially when there are multiple focus groups within the same study analysis” (Onwuegbuzie et al. 2009, p. 6). Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009) recommended that researchers design their studies with multiple focus groups to have groups with which to test themes.

Onwuegbuzie et al. 2009 stated:

When discussing emergent themes, we recommend that in addition to providing verbatim statements i.e., quotations made by focus group participants, whenever possible, researchers delineate information about the number or proportion of members who appeared to be part of the consensus from which the category or theme emerged. (p. 8)

Research Subjects

The population for this study was individuals who interact with the FAPC in the state of Oklahoma. Convenient samples composed of FAPC staff and members of the FAPC Industry Advisory Committee who attended the bi-annual FAPC Industry Advisory Committee meeting served as subjects for this study. These groups of individuals were invited to participate in this study because of their experience and relationship with the FAPC. To ensure a representation of staff and stakeholder perceptions, respondents of the study included staff (n=19) and stakeholders (n=10).

Instrumentation

The instrument used to collect data for this study was developed from previous brand work at Vermeer Corporation of Pella, Iowa. (see APPENDIX E)

FAPC Brand Perception Gathering

For this study, data were collected in two sessions. On December 16, 2011, data were collected from FAPC staff prior to a FAPC long-term vision session. Location for the session was the FAPC conference room in Stillwater, Oklahoma. Attendees of the session (n=19) were asked to participate in the focus group session. On November 10, 2011, data were collected from FAPC stakeholders at the bi-annual FAPC Industry Advisory Committee meeting. Location for the meeting was Unitherm Food Systems in Bristow, Oklahoma. Attendees of the meeting (n=10) were asked to participate in the focus group session. A 100% response rate was achieved from the two sessions.

I conducted both focus groups sessions following the focus group protocol and focus group moderator guide to ensure consistency. Question Set One used classification questions and sentence completion. “Classification questions are questions that are not directly about the subject of the survey, but seek personal details of the respondent or their household that you need for analysis purposes” (Adams & Brace, 2006, p. 92). “Respondents should complete sentences in their own words, for example, ‘Men who wear this aftershave are...’” (Adams & Brace, 2006, p. 83). Question Set Two used brand personality and projective techniques to identify FAPC brand perceptions. “Respondents are asked to say or write down who a brand would be if it came of life, and they explain their choice: for instance, if this brand were footballer (or a football team), who would it be?” (Adams & Brace, 2006, p. 83). Projective techniques are “a name given to a collection of techniques that help the respondent to imagine a situation” (Adams & Brace, 2006, p. 83).

The focus group sessions were audio and video recorded for accuracy of

transcription. The consent, and personal and professional characteristic forms were disseminated at the beginning of the sessions and collected at the conclusion of the sessions.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative researcher, trustworthiness pertains to dimensions of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Carson et al., 2001). The researcher addressed trustworthiness through the following methods.

Credibility (in preference to internal validity)

Shenton (2004) argued credibility as one of the most important factors of trustworthiness. I addressed creditability by reviewing published research methods, developed familiarity with the culture of the FAPC staff and stakeholders, obtaining a random sampling of respondents, using methods of focus group and questionnaire gathering, informing respondents at the beginning of the session that there are no right or wrong answers and they had the right to withdrawal from the session, use of probing questions to dive further into the details, a collaborative session with the FAPC Director and marketing group, presented and welcomed feedback on the scope of the study at the 2011 FAPC Research Symposium, checked “on the spot” dialogue for correct interpretation, provided a thick description of the study to support credibility, and related the study to past studies.

Transferability (in preference to external validity)

Shenton (2004) stated:

The concern often lies in demonstrating that the results of the work at hand can be applied to a wider population. Since the findings of a qualitative project are

specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals, it is impossible to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions are applicable to other situations and populations. (p. 70)

With the findings being limited to a sampling of FAPC staff and stakeholders, I identified boundaries of the study with the number of respondents involved, respondent limitations, data collection methods, the number and length of the data collection sessions, and the period of time that the data was collected (Shenton, 2004).

Thick Description

A thick description or interpretation of a research provides a “road-map” (Carson et al., 2001). The following is the thick description of this study.

Notifications of the sessions were sent out via email by the respective session coordinators. I followed the moderator guide to ensure consistency for the sessions and informed the group that I would not be contributing to the conversation but rather serving as facilitator. A total of eight questions were asked. The session was divided into two question sets, and audio and video were recorded for data transcription purposes. The first set was developed for individuals to become comfortable with the setting and interact with one another while becoming involved in the brand conversation. The second and core set of questions used personality questions to uncover brand perceptions.

For the purpose of providing an unbiased arena and no correlation to a specific sex, I worded all questions as “he or she” or “him or her.” Throughout the session, I kept the questioning and conversation moving. Additionally, as group members engaged in conversation among themselves, I worked to mediate and maintain focus. I also worked to include all individuals in the conversation because of the importance of gathering

brand FAPC perceptions from all respondents, not just dominant personalities. The set target length for the sessions was 30 minutes.

Specifically, staff respondents were notified via email of the December 16, 2011 focus group session by Lori Fancher, lead administrative assistance at the FAPC. Staff attendance was encouraged as following the focus group session a FAPC long-term vision and planning session for the Center was to be held. The focus group audience included administrative, professional and technical staff, and research faculty. The staff session lasted 37 minutes. Erin Johnson, FAPC Business and Marketing Client Coordinator, notified stakeholder respondents via email of the November 11, 2011 focus group session as part of the bi-annual Industry Advisory Committee meeting. The stakeholder session lasted 34 minutes.

Prior to the start of each session, Mandy Gross, FAPC Communications Services Manager, introduced the researcher. I assured participants of complete confidentiality and asked each person to agree to partake in the session by signing the consent form.

As I proceeded with the session, the personal and professional characteristics form was distributed. I then read through the focus group protocol from the approved moderator guide. The personal and professional characteristics information was used to ensure a cross representation of the respondent audience. Following the reading, I began with the slated question sets.

One respondent made mention at the staff focus group session that he was concerned with the way staff were recruited to his session. The participant felt rather than being voluntarily, staff were recruited to participate in the session and strongly encouraged by the FAPC Director. I thanked the participant for his remark and said his

concerns would be addressed following the session. I then proceeded on with the staff Question Set One.

First, I asked the participants to describe their experience with the FAPC. I began with an individual on the far left side of the room asking each person to describe to share their FAPC experience. I then opened the discussion floor with the question: “When telling others about the FAPC, what do you say?” Next, participants were asked: “Why do clients utilize the FAPC?” Based on the participant responses, I used general probing questions of “Why?” and “How so?” As the discussion continued, I asked for concluding thoughts of Question Set One.

Next, I read from the moderator guide the introduction to the second question set. I asked participants to “think of the FAPC as a person then describe his or her personality.” I followed participant response with probing questions. I then asked the group to “think of the FAPC as a person and share his or her weaknesses.” Why, what causes these weaknesses, and how can the FAPC fix it were the common probing questions. I proceeded to the next question of “think of the FAPC as a person and share what he or she has to offer that no one else can.” I then asked respondents to “think of the FAPC as a person and share what keeps him or her up at night.” Why and how so were asked as probing questions. Finally, I asked the question of “think of the FAPC as a person and share what famous icon he or she would be.” As famous icons were mentioned, I asked the respondent to explain why they associate that icon with the FAPC.

I closed the session by asking for other thoughts or comments. With no response, I summarized main points of the discussion and returned to the moderator guide for closing remarks. I thanked participants for taking the time to share their opinions as it

provided valuable insight into the FAPC brand. I collected personal and professional characteristics form and the session was concluded.

Dependability (in preference to reliability)

“In addressing the issue of reliability, the positivist employs techniques to show that, if the work were repeated, in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants, similar results would be obtained” (Shenton, 2004, p. 71). To achieve dependability, I described detailed processes in the thick description of the study.

Confirmability (in preference to objectivity)

Shenton (2004) said “The concept of confirmability is the qualitative investigator’s comparable concern to objectivity” (p. 72). To ensure objectivity, I used two methods (focus group, personal and professional characteristics form) for data collection. In addition, I provided the detailed approach and noted any limitations.

Data Collection

From the identified set of brand personality questions developed through the work at Vermeer Corporation, this study worked to identify staff and stakeholder perceptions of the FAPC brand. The research findings were determined through capturing FAPC brand perceptions in a 34 and 37-minute focus group sessions on December 16, 2011 and November 10, 2011. The focus group instrument consisted of two-part questioning. Make-up of the focus group sessions included representatives of the FAPC staff and stakeholder audience. Through asking brand personality questions, the sessions collected brand perceptions.

First, personal and professional characteristics forms were distributed then

collected to ensure diversity of the population, and that both staff and stakeholder audience perceptions were represented. This form collected information for respondents including sex, age, ethnicity, education level, total income, food and/ or agriculture industry experience, business ownership, and encounters and experience with the FAPC brand. Specific questions of the personal and professional characteristics form included:

1. What is your sex?
2. What is your age
3. What is your ethnicity?
4. What is your highest level of education?
5. What is your annual income?
6. How many years have you been involved in the food/ agricultural industry?
7. Do you own a business?
8. How long have you worked with the FAPC?
9. How many times have you experienced the FAPC brand?

Before questioning, participants were informed of focus group protocol then agreed to participate in the questioning by signing the consent form. The instrument used to identify FAPC brand perceptions consisted of two parts. Three open-ended questions were asked as part of an opening exercise and to gather more about the focus group attendees. Part one included focus group participants sharing their experience with the FAPC, what they tell others about the FAPC and why they think clients utilize the FAPC. Next, the focus group sessions worked through five open-ended questions. Part two consisted of the core group of brand personality questions relating to perceptions of the FAPC brand. The questions are as follows:

1. Think of the FAPC as a person, describe his or her personality.
2. Think of the FAPC as a person, what are his or her weaknesses?
3. Think of the FAPC as a person, what does he or she have to offer that no one else can?
4. Think of the FAPC as a person, what keeps him or her up at night?
5. Think of the FAPC as a person, what famous icon would he or she be?

The collected brand perception findings were used to identify staff and stakeholder perceptions of the FAPC brand. Final work of the study included analyzing the identified brand perceptions for reoccurring general themes.

Data Analysis

The researcher entered the data from the personal and professional characteristic form into Microsoft Excel. The personal and professional characteristic data were analyzed. The researcher also transcribed the focus group sessions into a Microsoft Word document, which included page and line numbers for means of reference. The researcher then color-coded the transcriptions identifying general reoccurring themes from each focus group session. The researcher did not identify specific individuals in the transcription but referred to the respondents as speaker.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings from the data collected from FAPC staff and stakeholder brand perceptions.

Findings for Objective 1

Objective 1 was to describe selected characteristics (sex, age, ethnicity, education level, total income, food and/ or agriculture industry experience, business ownership, encounters and experience with the FAPC brand) of FAPC staff.

Of the staff focus group session participants ($f=19$), 7 (36.84%) identified themselves as male and 12 (63.16%) as female. These data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Staff Audience Sex (n=19)

Sex	<i>f</i>	%
Male	7	36.84
Female	12	63.16

Six (31.58%) of the participants indicated their age was 31-40 years, 9 (47.37%) said they were 41-50 years old, 2 (10.53%) said they were 51-60 years old, and 2 (10.53%) said they were 61 years of age or older. These data are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Staff Audience Age (n=19)

Age	<i>f</i>	%
31-40 years old	6	31.58
41-50 years old	9	47.37
51-60 years old	2	10.53
61 years old or older	2	10.53

When asked their ethnicity, 11 (57.89%) participants responded White, 5 (26.32%) White, Non-Hispanic, 1 (5.26%) African American, and 2 (10.53%) Asian-Pacific Islander. These data are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Staff Audience Ethnicity (n=19)

Ethnicity	<i>f</i>	%
White	11	57.89
White, Non-Hispanic	5	26.32
African American	1	5.26

Asian-Pacific Islander	2	10.53
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When asked about their highest level of education, 4 (21.05%) indicated they did not have a college degree, 3 (15.79%) responded they had a 2-year or 4-year college degree, 6 (31.58%) had a master's degree, 5 (26.32%) doctoral degree, and 1 (5.26%) had a professional degree (MD, JD). These data are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Staff Audience Highest Level of Education (n=19)

Educational Level	<i>f</i>	%
No college degree	4	21.05
2-year or 4-year degree	3	15.79
Master's degree	6	31.58
Doctoral degree	5	26.32
Professional degree	1	5.26

Respondent annual income declaration was: 3 (15.79%) \$20,000-\$29,999; 4 (21.05%) \$30,000-\$39,999; 4 (21.05%) \$40,000-\$49,999; 2 (10.53%) \$50,000-\$59,999; 1 (5.26%) \$70,000-\$79,999; 1 (5.26%) \$80,000-\$89,999; 1 (5.26%) \$100,000-\$149,500; and, 3 (15.79%) provided no answer. These data are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Staff Audience Annual Income (n=19)

Annual Income	<i>f</i>	%
\$20,000-\$29,999	3	15.79
\$30,000-\$39,999	4	21.05
\$40,000-\$49,999	4	21.05
\$50,000-\$59,999	2	10.53
\$70,000-\$79,999	1	5.26
\$80,000-\$89,999	1	5.26
\$100,000-\$149,500	1	5.26
No answer	3	15.79

When asked about their years of experience in the food and/ or agricultural industry, 9 (47.37%) had 10 or fewer years, 6 (31.58%) had 11-20 years, and 2 (10.53%) had more than 20 years. Two (10.53%) respondents provided no answer. These data are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Staff Audience Experience in the Food/ Agriculture Industry (n=19)

Years of Experience	<i>f</i>	%
10 or fewer years	9	47.37
11-20 years	6	31.58
More than 20 years	2	10.53
No answer	2	10.53

When asked how many of the respondents own a business, 1 (5.26%) answered the affirmative and 16 (84.21%) said no. Two (10.53%) staff members did not answer.

These data are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Staff Audience Business Owners (n=19)

	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Business owners		
Yes	1	5.26
No	16	84.21
No answer	2	10.53

Nine (47.37%) respondents indicated they had 5 or fewer years of experience working with the FAPC. Two (10.53%) staff members had worked with FAPC 6 – 9 years, and 6 (31.58%) had worked with FAPC 10 or more years. There were 2 (10.53%) non-respondents. These data are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Staff Audience Experience Working with the FAPC (n=19)

	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Experience work with FAPC		
5 or fewer	9	47.37
6-9 years	2	10.53
10 or more years	6	31.58
No answer	2	10.53

Staff members were asked to indicate the number of times they had experienced the FAPC brand. Four (21.05%) said 0 to 10 times, 1 (5.26%) said 31 to 90 times, 1 (5.26%) said 91 to 150 times, and 10 (52.63%) said more than 150 times. Three (15.79%) persons provided no answer. These data are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Staff Audience Experiences with the FAPC Brand (n =19)

FAPC Brand Experiences	<i>f</i>	%
0-10 times	4	21.05
31-90 times	1	5.26
91-150 times	1	5.26
More than 150 times	10	52.63
No answer	3	15.79

Findings for Objective 2

Objective 2 was to describe selected characteristics (sex, age, ethnicity, education level, total income, food and/ or agriculture industry experience, business ownership, encounters and experience with the FAPC brand) of FAPC stakeholders.

Of the stakeholder focus group session participants (*f*= 10), 8 (80%) identified themselves as males and 2 (20%) as females. These data are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

Stakeholder Audience Sex (n=10)

Sex	<i>f</i>	%
Male	8	80
Female	2	20

One (10%) of the participants indicated their age was 31-40 years, 2 (20%) said they were 41-50 years old, and 7 (70%) said they were 61 years of age or older. These data are presented in Table 11.

Table 11

Stakeholder Audience Age (n=10)

Age	<i>f</i>	%
31-40 years old	1	10
41-50 years old	2	20
61 years old or older	7	70

When asked their ethnicity, 7 (70%) participants responded as White, 1 (10%) White, Non-Hispanic, and 2 (20%) Native American. These data are presented in Table 12.

Table 12

Stakeholder Audience Ethnicity (n=10)

Ethnicity	<i>f</i>	%
White	7	70

White, Non-Hispanic	1	10
Native American	2	20

When asked about their highest level of education, 4 (40%) indicated they had no more than a 4-year college degree (BA, BS), 5 (50%) had a master's degree, and 1 (10%) doctoral degree. These data are presented in Table 13.

Table 13

Stakeholder Audience Highest Level of Education (n=10)

Educational Level	<i>f</i>	%
2-year or 4-year degree	4	40
Master's degree	5	50
Doctoral degree	1	10

Respondents annual income declaration was: 1 (10%) \$30,000-\$39,999; 1 (10%) \$40,000-\$49,999; 1 (10%) \$50,000-\$59,999; 1 (10%) \$100,000-\$149,500; 4 (40%) more than \$150,000; and, 2 (20%) provided no answer. These data are presented in Table 14.

Table 14

Stakeholder Audience Annual Income (n=10)

Annual Income	<i>f</i>	%
\$30,000-\$39,999	1	10
\$40,000-\$49,999	1	10

\$50,000-\$59,999	1	10
\$100,000-\$149,500	1	10
More than \$150,000	4	40
No answer	2	20

When asked about their years of experience in the food and/ or agricultural industry, 1 (10%) had 10 or fewer years, 1 (10%) had 11-20 years, and 6 (60%) had more than 20 years. Two (20%) respondents provided no answer. These data are presented in Table 15.

Table 15

Stakeholder Audience Experience in the Food/ Agriculture Industry (n=10)

Years of Experience	<i>f</i>	%
10 or fewer years	1	10
11-20 years	1	10
More than 20 years	6	60
No answer	2	20

When asked how many of the respondents own a business, 6 (60%) answered the affirmative and 2 (20%) said no. Two (20%) staff members did not answer. These data are presented in Table 16.

Table 16

Stakeholder Audience Business Owners (n=10)

Business Owners	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	6	60
No	2	20
No answer	2	20

Four (40%) respondents indicated they had 5 or fewer years of experience working with the FAPC. Four (40%) had worked with FAPC 10 or more years. There were 2 (20%) non-respondents. These data are represented in Table 17.

Table 17

Stakeholder Audience Experience Working with the FAPC (n=10)

Experience work with FAPC	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
5 or fewer	4	40
10 or more years	4	40
No answer	2	20

Stakeholders were asked to indicate the number of times they had experienced the FAPC brand. Three (30%) said 1 to 30 times, 1 (10%) said 31 to 90 times, and 4 (40%) said more than 150 times. Two (30%) persons provided no answer. These data are represented in Table 18.

Table 18

Stakeholder Audience Experiences the FAPC Brand (n=10)

FAPC Brand Experiences	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
0-30 times	3	30
31-90 times	1	10
More than 150 times	4	40
No answer	2	20

Findings for Objective 3

Objective 3 was to determine perceptions of FAPC staff regarding the FAPC brand. Through coding the staff focus group transcription, the researcher identified the following themes.

Recognition

Recognition was noted as a resounding theme of the staff focus group session. Throughout Question Set One and Question Set Two, the common theme of the need for more and/or better recognition for the Center was mentioned. For example, a respondent shared information about their role at the FAPC in the marketing and communications department and mentioned the need for FAPC recognition. The respondent said “So I think it is part of the communications area, as well as the marketing area to let everybody know what we do here and why they need to come see us. And, of course there’s always room for improvement...” (p. 6, lines 180-183). When the staff audience was asked what they tell others about the FAPC, a respondent stated “I let people know that we are a decent meat center, that we are not known and working here on campus and right across the street. Until I came over, I had no idea what FAPC was and what was done here, and so it is a joy to share that with other people exactly what we do – what all we do” (p. 8,

lines 218-222). Then later in the questioning, when I asked why clients utilize the FAPC, discussion again circled back to the need for recognition of the Center. “But I think the resounding or reoccurring comment is that a lot of people still don’t know we are here and maybe others that don’t know you are here would make benefit of it if they did, and how you get that, how you get to them is I guess across to that issue” (p. 9, lines 269-273).

Furthermore, the group specifically discussed the lack of recognition of the FAPC on the Oklahoma State University campus. “...There are people on the other side of the campus, that don’t know that we harvest beef, pork and lamb on the second floor...” (p. 10, lines 278-280). One respondent goes on to say that students, staff and faculty should be aware of the Center. “Also, this is a public institution so I think everybody has the right to know what we are doing here” (p. 11, lines 335-336). Late in the session, a participant made the following statement when asked the question of what keeps the FAPC up at night: “And it is people not knowing about us, like it was mentioned a couple of times, across campus, people not knowing about us. How can you not know what is in your backdoor?” (p. 15, lines 436-438). This comment was verified with this statement by another participant “There is very little interaction between the university and the Center ...” (p. 10, lines 298-299).

One-stop-shop

In many instances, the staff referred to the FAPC as being the “one-stop shop” for food and agribusinesses in Oklahoma. A respondent said “I also think it is a one-stop-shop. I don’t think anywhere else in the state or even the United States that you can come

and get all of the resources that you need from chemistry to agribusiness to microbiology” (p. 7, lines 192-195). Furthermore when asked why clients utilize the FAPC, respondents referred to the varying services and disciplines offered at the FAPC. “There is not anywhere else that you can come and do that kind of research, at least on the stuff that I do, for that kind of price” (p. 8, lines 230-231).

Also we have very different people that can access – to have questions answered whether they be businesses or some product with technical process. They don’t have to run around to different areas of the state, or even the phonebook, to get really different kinds of questions answered, for less. (p. 8-9, lines 241-246)

Another said “We are versatile like he said that we can help them through their entire process, from beginning to years down the road when they are a lot bigger, or if something didn’t work we can help them start again or whatever it might be for a lot of resources” (p. 9, lines 250-253). A comment in reference to being the one-stop-shop to clients included:

It’s just obvious that we have a collection of expertise in various areas that all fit different aspects of food processing, and can easily contribute our knowledge and expertise to a company expertise, actually for free even over a conversation. But you have food engineers and you have meat processing specialist who may grow business, out of business marketing side and other aspects of the company, so you have an assemble of people who can – where a company can actually plug into all of those but then they have specific issues that only hit one or two of those particular needs of expertise but there’s, I guess, a complete one-stop shopping, if

you will, for the type of expertise any company would need to have. (p. 9, lines 256-266)

However, respondents felt the idea of being the one-stop-shop has a negative side. A respondent who previously commented positively about being a one-stop-shop followed with the thought:

And although that may be a benefit, I think it is also – maybe not hurt us, but I don't know what area are we just known for. I don't think there is really just one area – I think we are really good at all these areas but I think that people come here and they can get all their answers or all their questions answered in whatever area, whether it is business and marketing or whether it is something technical – analytical services. (p. 7, lines 195-201)

Additionally when the group was asked to describe the FAPC's personality, a respondent said "schizophrenic because we have multiple personalities" (p. 12, lines 349-350). This respondent's thought continues with "We do pretty much try to be all things to all people, I mean, for some people no matter how ridiculous the project will be, we are there working" (p. 12, lines 350-353). Another respondent said "I mean, we are trying to be all things to all people, and so that means you get on some very interesting things. You hit it all" (p. 12, lines 357-359). Similarly one said "Trying to be all things to all people" (p. 13, line 378). Another staff member mentioned "I mean we are basically trying to help the state of Oklahoma and other people. I mean besides Oklahoma, I mean anybody can come in here from the United States, anywhere around it, and we can help them" (p. 13, lines 371-374).

The staff audience dialogue circled the FAPC one-stop-shop services offering. “...the company may only need two aspects from the services we have now. Later on they might need some of the others so it goes back to the one-stop shop. So while we can excel at one thing, we can be very good at one other thing” (p. 13, lines 384-388). One respondent shared how being all things to all people can be a determinate:

...trying to meet those needs that they can, again, it leads back earlier about not being specialized in one area and be pulled in a lot of different directions, and so you’re never really necessarily good at doing one of them, and so you are forever under the gun to meet the next need, and so it is never ‘I put this thing fully to bed’ it is ‘All right, but what is going to be the next thing that we have to sort of try to adjust to the need?’ (p. 14-15, lines 426-432)

Limited Resources

Staff focus group respondents discussed limited resources. First off, a participant referenced human resource needs when asked what keeps the FAPC up at night.

Yeah, if somebody gives me the funding for hiring a technician for a project, yes, I can do that fast because I have lots of technicians doing several projects. I cannot dedicate one person to one project. So, that slowness is, again, it’s not an internal issue or a personal issue. (p. 14, lines 407-411)

This comment was followed by this of another participant “It’s lack of manpower, lack of resources” (p. 14, lines 412). Limited resources in reference to equipment needs were also mentioned. “We don’t have great support for equipment that we need to run the lab and so I kind of feel like I to use rubber bands here and there, but I can fix them” (p. 17, lines 496-498). One respondent attributed limited resources to “It’s the funding,

funding, funding, funding” (p. 15, line 434). Additionally, a participant offers the following comment:

But that long deciding comes from the resources. Industries or the companies in Oklahoma are so small that they do not support us with the resources, finances. So because of that, we cannot really go fast. We cannot hire people. We cannot purchase important things like that, so I don’t think we are personally slow, I mean what we are doing; but the slowness comes from the lack of resources or limited resources. (p. 13-14, lines 393-399)

Findings for Objective 4

Objective 4 was to determine perceptions of FAPC stakeholder regarding the FAPC brand. From the stakeholder focus group coded transcription, the following themes were noted by the researcher.

Recognition

Throughout the session, the stakeholder group discussed the need for recognition of the Center. One respondent attributes the FAPC’s lack of recognition to “It [the FAPC] needs to communicate its success more. It [the FAPC] needs to get out and fight for space in the market” (p. 8, lines 235-236). Another stakeholder respondent mirrored the previous comment with “The FAPC doesn’t speak very often about itself, and a lot of people don’t say” (p. 8, line 232). Furthermore, a respondent said “That’s what we’re lacking is being about to make headlines of discovery, discovered...” (p. 8, lines 240-241). A similar comment included “What the Center really needs to look at is being able to have something to really brag about” (p. 8, lines 246-248).

Yet, one stakeholder respondent felt the FAPC is making positive strides in gaining recognition. “I think it’s becoming more and more effective every year as it becomes known for what it [the FAPC] does” (p. 6, lines 177-178).

Limited Resources

A common theme of the weakness and what would keep the FAPC up at night questions included limited resources – specifically funding and staffing. When asked the stakeholder audience what weaknesses they associated with the FAPC, a session participant said “Underfunded. It needs more staff. Needs new equipment” (p. 9-10, lines 278-282). When probed, the respondent continued:

Funding has to come from the state. There is some funding when it becomes independent but the boards currently raise the money at the moment to hire a person but then ultimately the state has to fund the Center, if it wants to continue to operate. (p. 10, lines 289-292)

Later in questioning, funding was a discussion point of what keeps the FAPC brand up at night. A respondent said “state funding” (p. 12, line 355). Another respondent quick followed the comment with “I second that” (p. 12, line 356). The conversation continued as one stated “If the funding was there, well, that would be corrected” (p. 12, line 360).

The FAPC brand weakness conversation also included limited resources from a staffing perspective. One respondent said “short of manpower” and “staffing” (p. 12, lines 358). When probed, the respondent said “Uh, the staffing, making sure that we cover all the areas that our industry, as a whole, needs and to fulfill those needs in a proper way” (p. 12, line 369-371).

Uniqueness

The uniqueness of the FAPC was a resounding theme. When the group was asked what the FAPC has to offer that no one else can, a stakeholder said:

It's the only facility like it in the United States that's small enough to access like small businesses but that has all the facilities from across all the commodities areas, made of production of Oklahoma, and livestock, grain, produce, beverage; it's the only place like it in the United States. (p. 11-12, lines 340-344)

As an aspect of uniqueness, the following was said "I think maybe the diversity and the experience of the faculty and staff would be hard to assemble in to many places" (p. 11, lines 328-329). Similarly, a participant said:

I think an opportunity for academia to meet industry and make it kind of along the lines what Jim says, that whether can you go get academic professionals and people that have worked out in the food and agricultural industry in one place? I don't think there are place out there like that. (p. 11, lines 333-337)

The stakeholder group also attributed the staff and faculty of the Center as an element of uniqueness. For instance, a respondent talked about two gentlemen he works with at the FAPC: "I'm in the meat business so I deal with Jake and Kyle at least... Twice a week – a lot of times, four days a week about meat, we do a lot of dealing back and fourth. They scratch my back, I scratch their back" (p. 14, line 407-410). Another stakeholder described an attribute of FAPC personnel as "No matter what the crazy idea is we will see what we can do, they can work or see if it worked" (p. 14, line 432-434).

University Setting

On another instance of discussing FAPC weaknesses in regards to the brand

personality, the group exchanged their thoughts about the FAPC location, implications and “academic influence” (p. 12, line 364) of being located on the Oklahoma State University campus. For example, a session participant stated:

Some of the universities restrict and hinder the Center (kinda). They’re not necessarily there at the teaching institution per se, yet the university rules and regulations follow the line of teaching and teaching research. That doesn’t fit totally what we’re after. (p. 10, lines 306-309)

Similarly, a respondent stated “...the commitment of the university, of Oklahoma State University to the Center, while it’s not bad, it’s not where it need to be. It needs to have more focus and more attention that we’re not getting from the administration” (p. 10, lines 300-304). Furthermore one responded with “a sense of urgency” as a weakness of the Center because of its location (p. 10, lines 294). When probed, the respondent stated:

We get, like I said, professors that, you know, they’re doing their research, and the university setting has kind of a different atmosphere that private industry; you know, private industry is go, go, go. We’re a little bit on a different level sometimes that that just because it’s a different world. (p. 10, lines 294-299)

Supporting Oklahoma

FAPC stakeholders discussed the value of the Center in the state of Oklahoma. When the group was asked by clients utilize the FAPC, a participant said:

While we have developed a dried mushroom powder that the flavors industry is looking for, we had a problem with keeping that color of the dried product. And the Center helped us take that... solved that problem, so we had, as far as the

industry is concerned, the number one product because of that, because our color is there. (p. 3, lines 76-80)

Another stakeholder had called up the FAPC themselves for assistance with their business. One said “The Center helped the Oklahoma wine industry recently develop some marketing material to try to get Oklahoma wine to restaurants in the local area” (p. 3, lines 88-90). Another respondent said:

...And, on several occasions, I’ve had past relationships, people calling and needing support for various projects and I send them to Dr. Escoubas and the staff there that’s a great resources to support our food industry in Oklahoma. (p. 5, lines 131-135)

Furthermore, when stakeholders were asked what they tell others about the FAPC, one said “It’s the best of the U.S. center in what they do and supporting Oklahoma agriculture from a producer to a finished good” (p. 5, lines 138-139). Another stated:

Well, it’s the one place in Oklahoma to help develop the food that farmers produce in Oklahoma, and that’s one of the original intent, to get this Center (FAPC) established, because we’re producing the food that major companies were then adding the... value-added to the product and they were making the most money and the farmer wasn’t getting any. (p. 6, lines 170-175)

Finally, a stakeholder attributed the Center to reaping rewards for Oklahoma “So sometimes I get to talk about the return of investment put back to Oklahoma is over 31 %, and where else do you get that kind of return of investment” (p. 6, lines 165-186).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is composed of a discussion of conclusions, implications, recommendations for future research and practice, and discussion.

Conclusions and Implications for Objective 1

Objective 1 was to describe selected FAPC staff characteristics of sex, age, ethnicity, education level, total income, food and/ or agriculture industry experience, business ownership, and encounters and experience with the FAPC brand. According to the most recently published FAPC Annual Report (2012), the Center employs:

Eight faculty members in oilseed chemistry, cereal chemistry, horticultural products and processing, food industry economics, food microbiology and value added wood products. There are 11 professionals and five technical staff members in food process engineering, food microbiology, food sensory analysis, food harvest and processing technology, total quality management, global food safety programs, communications and media support, and marketing and business management. (p.4)

FAPC staff personal characteristics consisted of white females younger than 60 years old. Additionally, the staff audience professional characteristics included non-

business owners with 10 or fewer years of food and/ or agricultural experience, 5 or fewer years of experience working with the FAPC and the highest experience level with the FAPC brand. Interestingly, when two respondents were asked to share income, experience in the food and/ or agricultural industry, business ownership, years of working experience with the FAPC, and number of times they had experienced the FAPC brand, no answer was provided.

Conclusions and Implications for Objective 2

Objective 2 was to describe selected FAPC stakeholder characteristics of sex, age, ethnicity, education level, total income, food and/ or agriculture industry experience, business ownership, and encounters and experience with the FAPC brand. According to the FAPC Annual Report (2012),

FAPC has the privilege of an oversight committee to help guide the Center. The Oklahoma State Legislature established the Industry Advisory Committee to serve as an advisory board for FAPC. The FAPC Industry Advisory Committee consists of Oklahoma agricultural leaders, appointed by the highest positions of the Oklahoma state government and vice president and dean of OSU's Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. (p. 6)

Stakeholder personal characteristic results portray the audience as older white males with an educational degree of bachelor, master or doctoral. Professional stakeholder characteristics included the group being business owners with more than 20 years of food and/ or agricultural industry experience. However, encounters and FAPC brand experience levels varied for the stakeholder audience. Additionally, one can conclude that 2 respondents felt uncomfortable answering or simply skipped the

remaining 5 questions of the personal and professional characteristics form.

Conclusions and Implications for Objective 3

Objective 3 was to determine perceptions of FAPC staff regarding the FAPC brand. The researcher identified recognition, one-stop-shop and limited resources as common themes of the staff focus group session.

From the beginning of Question Set One when participants described their experience with the FAPC to Question Set Two when asked what famous icon the FAPC would be, staff respondents shared the need for heightened recognition of the Center. A participant summed up the general need for FAPC recognition with "...a lot of people still don't know we are here and maybe others that don't know you are here would make benefit of it if they did, and how you get that, how you get to them is I guess across to that issue" (p. 9, lines 269-273). Seetharaman et al. (2001) said "Awareness, loyalty and quality perceptions are the three main components of a successful brand (p. 244). This committee's research identified "...when the customers are aware of the brand, loyal to the brand and perceive the brand as having quality" (Seetharaman et al., 2001, p. 244).

The staff group took the recognition conversation a step further to lack of FAPC brand recognition on the Oklahoma State University campus. Discussion was best summed up by the respondent comment: "And it is people not knowing about us, like it was mentioned a couple of times, across campus, people not knowing about us. How can you not know what is in your backdoor?" (p. 15, lines 436-438). This comment was backed by another statement "There is very little interaction between the university and the Center ..." (p. 10, lines 298-299). Uniquely in 2011 personal communication with FAPC Director, J. Roy Escoubas, the staff comments were confirmed. Escoubas shared

that the purpose, disciplines and services offered by the Center are typically unknown to Oklahoma State University students, outside FAPC staff and faculty, and visitors to the university, or often miscommunicated to those who have experienced the FAPC brand (J. R. Escoubas, personal communications, 2011).

Next, it was evident that the staff audience identified themselves as the one-stop-shop, realizing individuals of the staff session represented many services and disciplines offered by the FAPC. Lenderman (2006) said “In effect, a brand is the sum of the customer’s experiences with the relevant product or company. It is transmitted in every interaction with the customer over the lifetime of the relationship” (p. 303). As such, a unique sense of pride was apparent in those representing each discipline. “No different than what I did this morning, we all these different services under one roof” (p. 14, lines 415-416). Yet, many expressed negative comments of the Center’s offering multiple services and disciplines. “It is difficult to be really great at something if you are trying to be... if you are trying to do everything for everybody” (p. 13, lines 381-382). It can be concluded that the staff audience felt the FAPC brand provides varying services and acts on different levels of the organization (Reynolds, 2007).

Finally, it’s to no surprise that the need for funding, equipment and additional resources was a topic of conversation for FAPC staff as funding for value-added agricultural centers such as the FAPC comes through tax dollars from state or federal governments (McConaghy, 2007). Comments ranged from “It’s the funding, funding, funding, funding” (p. 15, line 434) to “We don’t have great support for equipment that we need to run the lab and so I kind of feel like I to use rubber bands here and there, but I can fix them” (p. 17, lines 496-498).

Conclusions and Implications for Objective 4

Objective 4 was to determine perceptions of FAPC stakeholders regarding the FAPC brand. Recognition, limited resources, uniqueness, university setting, and supporting Oklahoma were identified as resounding themes of the stakeholder focus group session.

Throughout questioning, much of the stakeholder comments circled the FAPC brand and distinguishing itself from the competition. A respondent said “It [the FAPC] needs to communicate its success more. It [the FAPC] needs to get out and fight for space in the market” (p. 8, lines 235-236). Park, Jaworski, & MacInnis (1986) said specific characteristics differentiate products and brand from one another in the highly competitive marketplace.

The stakeholder audience discussed limited resources. A session participant said the Center is “underfunded” (p. 9-10, lines 278) and followed with the statement “It needs more staff. Needs new equipment” (p. 9-10, lines 281-282). A respondent said “If the funding was there, well, that would be corrected” (p. 12, line 360). The FAPC is public funded through Oklahoma tax dollars (FAPC 10-Year Economic Impact Report, 2007).

Next, the stakeholder audience referenced the robust discipline and service offering of the FAPC as a unique attribute of the Center. For example, one stated: “They [the FAPC] have so many different experts in all the different area of food production and you’ve come to the one place” (p.6, line 185-186). According to the FAPC 10-Year Economic Impact Report (2007), the FAPC has “assisted in the development of value-added enterprises by offering a combination of in-house technical and laboratory services

for entrepreneurs and existing businesses, on-site technical assistance for larger existing food processors, and various business and marketing assistance programs and workshops” (p. 4).

Stakeholder group wavered back and forth on their thought of the FAPC being located on the Oklahoma State University campus. According to (McConaghy, 2007), “Most value-added centers have similarities such as cooperation between public and private entities and a connection with a land-grant university (p. 2). A respondent stated:

...the commitment of the university, of Oklahoma State University to the Center, while it’s not bad, it’s not where it need to be” (p. 10, lines 300-303).

Interestingly, the FAPC brochure (2011) states the FAPC location on the Oklahoma State University campus “helps to bridge the gap that sometimes exists between academia and the private sector by offering large and small businesses, producers and entrepreneurs access to faculty and staff with expertise in business and technical disciplines. (p. 1)

Finally from the stakeholder’s perspective, the success or failure of the Center is largely attributed to what the FAPC is doing for the state of Oklahoma. According to the FAPC 10-Year Economic Impact Report (2007), “Since the FAPC is publicly funded, it is important to determine the returns to the state generated by this investment of Oklahoma tax dollars” (p. 4). A stakeholder described the successful FAPC impact on Oklahoma as “...sometimes I get to talk about the return of investment put back to Oklahoma is over 31 %, and where else do you get that kind of return of investment” (p. 6, lines 165-186).

Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

Much published research can be found regarding brand. Although Aaker's "Big Five" Brand Personality Scale has been tested on numerous accounts and deemed reliable quantitative research, the means of collecting qualitative brand perceptions is still considered in the realm of the interpretation. Researchers should focus on developing a method of qualitative research for gathering brand perceptions. "The ideas may only have been expressed by a small number of people, but they can provide an important starting point for further, quantitative research" (Adams & Brace, 2006, p. 75).

With the identified brand perceptions of the FAPC staff and stakeholder audiences, researchers could employ a large quantitative survey to further define the FAPC brand. Before fielding a large sample survey, focus groups are often conducted (Calder, 1977). "Researchers may have the much more ambitious goal of using qualitative research to generate or select theoretical ideas and hypotheses which they plan to verify with future quantitative research" (Calder, 1977, p. 353).

Employees and/or external audiences may suggest values that are bit included with the original brand definition. This could indicate that there is an element of the original brand idea that has been overlooked or poorly communicated. Action: review the brand definition to determine whether the suggested addition should be included. (Ind, 2004, p. 193)

Also, respondents of this study had experienced the FAPC more than 20 times. It can be concluded that respondents are aware of the FAPC brand. In this case, the brand has been communicated.

The brand is well understood (or differently understood) by internal audiences relative to external audiences. This is the opposite of the above and indicates that although the brand has been effectively embedded into the organization, insufficient attention had been paid to externally communicating the idea. This factor may be due to a time-lag effect, such as employees and marketing communication material are sending out the right brand messages but old perceptions are still pervasive due to the infrequency of interaction with the organization. (Ind, 2004, p. 194)

What would an individual say about the FAPC brand with little experience with the brand and would the brand be recognized? Aaker (1991) said experiencing and recognizing the brand is the first step in branding. “It usually is wasteful to attempt to communicate brand attributes until a name is established with which to associate attributes” (Aaker, 1991, p. 63). The researcher recommends surveying individuals who represent other audiences of clients, state organizations and other parties who have experienced the FAPC less than 20 times.

Finally, the researcher suggests a continual FAPC brand evaluation. According to Ind (2004), “There is a need to sustain the brand over time. This requires something that personalizes the idea of the brand so that it attains a vitality that motivates employees and builds identification with the organizations cause” (p. 161). The FAPC should consider an annual brand report as a form of measurement. The brand report should address aspects of the brand, performance during the year, and brand goals for the upcoming year (Ind, 2004). This brand measurement can enhance the duration and livelihood of the FAPC brand (Park et al., 1986).

Discussion

Although a comparison of the two key FAPC audiences was outside the scope and objectives of this study, there were similarities in the FAPC brand perceptions.

Recognition, one-stop-shop and limited resources were identified as common themes of the staff focus group session, while recognition, limited resources, uniqueness, university setting, and supporting Oklahoma were identified as themes of the stakeholder focus group session. As such, the similar perceptions for the FAPC staff and stakeholder brand perceptions included recognition and limited resources. Perhaps the FAPC marketing and communications team should develop a recognition initiative or awareness campaign to increase the visibility of the FAPC brand – both on the Oklahoma State University campus and the state of Oklahoma? Furthermore, the FAPC brand evaluation, as a recommendation of future practice, could assist with the need for increase recognition effort of the Center. Also, with funding for the Center coming thru tax dollars, the conversation of limited resources will likely be a topic of conversation for the existence of the FAPC.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Monday, November 07, 2011
IRB Application No AG1144
Proposal Title: Identifying Brand Perceptions of Internal and External Audiences of a Private Sector Facility Housed on a Land-grant University Campus

Reviewed and Exempt
Processed as:

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 11/6/2012

Principal
Investigator(s):

Kylee Willard	Dwayne Cartmell
5001 Oak Crest Court	448 Ag Hall
Stillwater, OK 74075	Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Shelia Kennison, Chair
Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX B:
RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

FAPC Brand Initiative Consent

Title: Identifying Brand Perceptions of Internal and External Audiences of a Private Sector Facility Housed on a Land-grant University Campus

Investigators: Kylee Willard, master's student of agricultural communications, will conduct research regarding the FAPC brand. Other collaborators and research advisors include Dwayne Cartmell, Rodney Holcomb and Robert Terry.

Purpose: With a marketplace cluttered with brand names and channels of consumer awareness opening, the need for an effectively communicated brand message is needed. The purpose of the research is to gain a better understanding of the gap between the internal and external perceptions of the Oklahoma State University's Robert M. Kerr Food & Agricultural Products (FAPC) Center brand while identifying opportunities to develop and disseminate a streamlined brand message for the FAPC.

What to Expect: This session will be audio and video recorded to ensure your opinion is taken into account. Later reports will not include any names attached to comments. Eight questions will be asked with probing questions, if needed. The session will last approximately 30 minutes.

Risks: There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Benefits: Benefits of this study include offering a more effectively communicated brand message to Oklahoma food and agricultural entrepreneurs who utilize the services and facilities of the FAPC. Additionally, the benefits of the study will trickle into the Oklahoma economy. As more individuals understand the resources available at and by the FAPC, opportunity for business development and prosperity in economy are enviable.

Your Rights: Participation is voluntary and involvement may be stopped at any time.

Confidentiality: All information about you will be kept confidential and will not be released. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records

Contacts: You may contact any of the researchers at the following addresses and phone numbers, should you desire to discuss your participation in the study and/or request information about the results of the study Kylee Willard, Agricultural Communications at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-477-3217 or Dwayne Cartmell, Agricultural Communications at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078, 205-744-0461. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily.

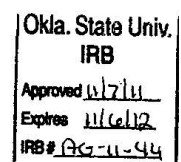
Signature of Participant

Date

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

Signature of Researcher

Date



APPENDIX C:

PARTICIPANT PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS FORM

FAPC Basic Demographics

1) Are you Male or Female?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

2) What is your age?

- ☐ 18-21
- ☐ 22-25
- ☐ 26-30
- ☐ 31-40
- ☐ 41-50
- ☐ 51-60
- ☐ 61 or over

3) What is your race?

- ☐ White
- ☐ White, non-Hispanic
- ☐ African-American
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Asian-Pacific Islander
- ☐ Native American
- ☐ Other

4) What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ☐ Less than High School
- ☐ High School/GED
- ☐ Some College
- ☐ 2-Year College Degree(Associates)
- ☐ 4-Year College Degree(BA,BS)
- ☐ Master's Degree
- ☐ Doctoral Degree
- ☐ Professional Degree(MD,JD)

5) What is your total annual income?

- ☐ Less than \$10,000
- ☐ \$10,000-\$19,999
- ☐ \$20,000-\$29,999
- ☐ \$30,000-\$39,999
- ☐ \$40,000-\$49,999

- ☐ \$50,000-\$59,999
- ☐ \$60,000-\$69,999
- ☐ \$70,000-\$79,999
- ☐ \$80,000-\$89,999
- ☐ \$90,000-\$99,999
- ☐ \$100,000-\$149,000
- ☐ More than \$150,000

6) How many years have you worked in the food and/or agricultural industry?

- ☐ 0-5
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ 11-20
- ☐ 21-30
- ☐ 31-40
- ☐ 41-50

7) Do you own a food and/or agricultural business?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8) How many years have you worked with the FAPC?

- ☐ First encounter
- ☐ 1 to 3 years
- ☐ 4 to 5 years
- ☐ 6 to 7 years
- ☐ 8 to 9 years
- ☐ 10 or more years

9) How many times have you experienced the FAPC brand?

- ☐ 0-10 times
- ☐ 1-30 times
- ☐ 31-90 times
- ☐ 91-150 times
- ☐ More than 150 times

APPENDIX D:

MODERATOR GUIDE

FAPC Brand

Moderator Guide

Moderator reads: Hello and welcome to our session today. Thank you for taking the time to join our discussion about branding. My name is Kylee Willard and I am a master's student at Oklahoma State University in the agricultural communications curriculum. This session is in collaboration with and sponsored by the Robert M. Kerr Food & Agricultural Products Center.

The center is interested in gathering your perception of the FAPC brand. The long-term goal of this initiative is to align the FAPC brand with the mission and work to effectively communicate the FAPC brand message in the future.

You have been asked to participate because of your engagement and/or interest in using services offered by the FAPC.

Before we begin, let me share some things to make our discussions easier. There are no right or wrong answers, but rather differing points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. Please speak up but only one person should talk at a time. We are audio and video recording the session because we don't want to miss your comments. We will communicate on a first-name basis, and in our later reports there will not be any names attached to comments. You can be assured of complete confidentiality.

My role here is to ask questions and listen. I won't be participating in the conversation, but I want you to feel free to talk with one another. I'll be asking about 8 questions, and will be moving the discussion from one question to the next. There is a tendency in these discussions for some people to talk a lot and some people not to say much. But it is important for us to hear from each of you today because you have different opinions and experiences. So if one of you is sharing a lot, I may ask you to let others respond. And if you aren't saying much, I may ask for your opinion.

Our session will last about 30 minutes. If you have your cell phone and need to leave it on, please leave the room when you get a call and return as quickly as possible. If you choose not to participate, I invite you at this time to step out of the room.

Let's begin. Let's find out some more about each other by going around the room one at a time. Tell us your name and a little about you, and your business interests.

Introductory information

Moderator reads: As I mentioned, your opinion in identifying perceptions of the FAPC brand is important because of your engagement and interest of the FAPC. These questions will help us to uncover more about your experience with the FAPC and how it relates to your perception of the current FAPC brand.

- Describe your experience with the FAPC.
- When telling others about the FAPC you say...
 - Probe: Why?
- Clients utilize the FAPC because ...
 - Probe: Why do people want to do business with the FAPC?

Moderator reads: Now, we will discuss the FAPC brand and personality traits associated with the brand. Please share with the group the first answer that comes to mind.

- Think of FAPC as a person: Describe the FAPC's personality.
 - Probe: You mentioned _____, what makes the FAPC _____?
- Think of FAPC as a person: What are his/her weaknesses?
 - Probe: Why?
 - Probe: What causes this weakness?
 - Probe: How can it be fixed?
- Think of FAPC as a person: What does he/she have to offer that no one else can?
- Think of FAPC as a person: What keeps him/her up at night?
 - Probe: How so?
- Think of FAPC as a person: What famous icon would he/she be?
 - Probe: Why?

Concluding discussion

I am now going to try to summarize the main points from today's discussion. (key messages and big ideas that developed from the discussion)...

- Is this an adequate summary?

Moderator reads: As was explained at the beginning of the session, the purpose of this focus group was to gather your perceptions of the FAPC brand. Your comments today will aid in the future development of the communicated brand message. Your input has provided us with a better understanding of the FAPC brand.

- Have we missed anything or are there any other comments?

Moderator reads: Thank you for taking time to share your opinions. Your participation is greatly appreciated and has provided valuable insight into this topic. Thank you again.

APPENDIX E:

VERMEER BRAND PERCEPTION GATHERING

Through an internship at Vermeer Corporation in Pella, Iowa, inspiration for the study and research design was taken from a larger study conducted during the summer of 2010. At the 2010 executive planning meeting, Vermeer Chief Executive Officer, Mary Andringa, identified 3 priorities in the 5-year vision of company. As a result, the Vermeer marketing department embraced Andringa's (2010) priority of "to understand and work for a true global brand presence in all our locations and with customers worldwide."

Andringa (2010) determined the goal of the Vermeer Global Brand Initiative as "to understand varied brand perceptions and drive global brand equity while creating a host of internal ambassadors (at all levels and locations) to serve as brand champions. These brand champions will be armed with a clear, concise, and compelling message to share with respect to the Vermeer brand."

The objective of the Vermeer Global Brand Initiative included development of a long term global brand strategy which is aligned with Vermeer's corporate strategy and 4P philosophy (people, profit, product and principles); package Vermeer's long term global brand strategy in such a way that it can be clearly communicated by internal constituents, thus driving desired behaviors and a host of passionate Vermeer brand ambassadors within the organization (brand promise, mission statement, vision statement and company tag line). Other objectives for initiative included defining Vermeer's current perceived brand position (How do we perceive Vermeer? How do they perceive Vermeer?), keeping in mind diverseness of people, markets and geographies; unveil the gap between "how we are perceived" and "how we would like to be perceived;" defining

how Vermeer's competitors are positioning themselves in various markets and geographies; determine specific positioning, messaging, and communication strategies including related tactics to bridge the gap of perceptions and drive brand equity while ensuring competitive differentiation, alignment, and continuity; and establishing a process for ongoing brand management and related metrics.

The first phase of the internal aspect of the initiative was to research and create a working knowledge regarding basic Vermeer brand identity, positioning and awareness through utilizing existing resources (customer satisfaction index interviews, voice of customer interviews), which provided insight into Vermeer brand perceptions. Phase two of the internal aspect was to define the Vermeer brand through surveying and focus group sessions of specific populations, audiences, and demographics with formulated questions. The focus of this phase was to take a formulated question set then test them across cross-section audiences in focus group sessions.

The data collection was spread into audiences through five different focus group organizations. The one-hour session included an introduction and objective outline; preface of the initiative; introduction of participants (name, business, title, number of years at current business location); Question Set One – personality questions; Question Set Two – audience specific questions; post focus group survey; questions; and adjournment.

Question Set One asked the brand personality questions. Participants were asked the following questions, then transcribed their answers on post-it note paper, which was then collected by the focus group facilitator. The facilitator shared the participant responses, then invited discussion. Items for the first question set included: Think of

Vermeer as a person: Describe his/her personality; Think of Vermeer as a person: What are his/her weaknesses?; Think of Vermeer as a person: What does he/she have to offer that no one else can?; and Think of Vermeer as a person: What keeps him/her up at night?

Items for Question Set Two asked participants specific questions based on predetermined internal or external audience characterization. The moderator asked the following audience tailored questions and participants provided feedback freely. Internal Audience Specific Questions included: Describe your experience with Vermeer.; When telling others about Vermeer you say?; What is it that you value about Vermeer?; How does Vermeer deliver on its value promise?; and Customers buy Vermeer because? External Audience Specific Questions: Describe your experience with Vermeer.; When telling others about Vermeer you say?; What is it that you value about Vermeer?; How does Vermeer deliver on its value promise?; and I buy Vermeer because?

Following the two-part focus group session, a short post focus group questionnaire was disseminated to the participants. The questionnaire focused on gaining a better understanding of how Vermeer is viewed in the marketplace and what brand attributes are preferred by customers. The focus groups were conducted under the terms that all questions worded as-is to have consistency in responses of all sessions; provide an enjoyable, unbiased arena where attendees all attendees engage in discussion; allow for attendees to express their feelings; and keep conversation following. Additionally, records of time, location, audience (internal vs. external), market segment, geographic region, specific details about attendee (name, business, title, number of years in position), group morale, and overall Vermeer brand perception was recorded.

Through research and focus group sessions with individuals representing the internal and external Vermeer audience, a series of questions identifying brand perceptions were developed. Additionally, through the trial and error process, the ideal length of the session and numbers of participants was identified.

VITA

Kylee Beth Willard

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: IDENTIFYING STAFF AND STAKEHOLDER BRAND PERCEPTIONS OF
THE ROBERT M. KERR FOOD & AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS CENTER

Major Field: Agricultural Communications

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Agricultural Communications at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December, 2013.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science/ in Agricultural Communications at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in 2011.

Experience:

Project Manager, Lessing-Flynn, Des Moines, Iowa, August 2012 to present, Communications Services Graduate Assistant, Robert M. Kerr Food & Agricultural Products Center, Stillwater, Oklahoma, March 2010 to August 2012, Media Relations and Marketing Manager, TheTextResults.com, Bartlesville, Oklahoma, April 2009 to March 2013, Social Media Community Manager and Image Sales Consultant, Alberta, Canada, Intermittently 2008 to January 2013, Livestock Show Resulting and Junior Livestock Shows Assistant, National Western Stock Show, Rodeo and Horse Show, Denver, Colorado, January 2010/ 2012/ 2013, Corporate Marketing and Global Brand Strategy Initiative Intern, Vermeer Corporation, Pella, Iowa, May 2010 to August 2010, Communications and Extension Outreach Assistant/ Newsletter Editor, Oklahoma AgrAbility Project and OSU Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering, Stillwater, Oklahoma, April 2009 to May 2010.

Professional Memberships:

National Agri-Marketing Association, Livestock Publications Council, Oklahoma State University Alumni Association, Black Hawk East Alumni Association, Black Hawk East Livestock Judging Alumni Association